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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CALLS ON QOSITIOQANDIDATE

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Ambassador met with Prof. John Atta-Mills, presidential candidate for the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the major opposition party in Ghana's December 7 election. Atta-Mills spent much of the meeting vociferously denouncing the campaign tactics of President John Kufuor and his ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP). Ambassador stressed the U.S. stance of neutrality in the electoral contest; the importance of peaceful elections; the imperative that the losing party, absent compelling evidence of fraud, accept the decision of Ghanaian voters; the need for any challenge to the results to be via the courts; and the promise that the U.S. would continue to pursue its various assistance programs, no matter which party triumphs, as long as the election is deemed to be free and fair. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador called on the NDC flag-bearer John Atta-Mills October 16 at his campaign headquarters. Atta-Mills wasted no time in attacking the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP), telling Ambassador that an unnamed NPP source had provided a document to his party that proved NPP collusion in rigging the voter registration process and laid out similar plans to fix the election itself. Visibly agitated, Atta-Mills quoted a "credible NPP source" as blatantly asserting that "We know we will lose, but we will steal the election." Atta-Mills promised to pass a copy of the document to the embassy. (NOTE: We have not yet received the document. END NOTE).

¶3. (U) Ambassador reassured Atta-Mills of U.S. neutrality regarding the election, stressing that the basis of the bilateral relationship rested on fundamentals that transcend the immQnt changQof governments on both sides of the Atlantic. He told Atta-Mills that whichever party ascended to power, America looked forward to continuing the special relationship that had been built up over the course of the past 50 years.

¶4. (U) Ambassador explained that he would be advising all parties to accept the will of the Ghanaian people after the election. While parties should reserve the right to legally challenge the outcome, he said, in the Ghana context there were no circumstances that would justify sending party supporters out on the street as had happened in Kenya. He told Atta-Mills that in the event of an NDC victory, he could rely on the U.S. to live up to all of its agreements, from MCC to security assistance to USAID programs and exchanges, and added that he would expect the new government to continue to support bilateral programs and other agreements put in place by the previous regime. Conversely, he made it clear that such assistance could be withheld in the face of power grabbing or circumstances that brought the results of the election into question.

¶5. (SBU) Atta-Mills responded that the NPP does its best to impress people of its special relationship with the United States. He repeated three times that despite honors that the U.S. has bestowed upon Kufuor, "the man is no role model."

He then launched into an attack on Kufuor's abuse of incumbency, failure to uphold the rule of law, selective justice, cronyism, and raiding of government coffers. He seemed especially stung by Kufuor's sign remarks over the weekend that questioned his fitness to lead and called a vote for the NDC an "abomination."

16. (U) Atta-Mills closed the meeting on a conciliatory note, saying that he and his party have never doubted the neutrality of the American government, and despite some inevitable policy differences, the party continues to see America as a strong partner that has helped Ghana enormously over the years.

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